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The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C.

Dear Cy:

We have now had a chance to study carefully the proposed NRO agreement drafted by Dr. Fubini, and it is one which deserves careful reading. I must say frankly that it does not reflect my concept of how the NRO ought to function in order to serve the national interest, nor do I believe that the proposed draft can be used as a basis for detailed negotiation at this time. It may be that I have not adequately explained my own concepts, and I thought that it would be useful at this time to set down my own view of how the NRO should combine the capabilities of DoD, CIA, and other Government agencies into a truly national program.

It seems to me that we should look to the NRO to provide the vital central management of our National Reconnaissance Program, the execution of which would be delegated on a jointly agreed basis to qualified elements of the Government. I do not believe that the NRO should be engaged in letting contracts for development and procurement, nor should it be manning and conducting actual reconnaissance operations. These are functions which the CIA, Navy, and Air Force are qualified and experienced in discharging.

NRO review(s)
completed.

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To create, as Dr. Fabini proposes, a new agency to carry out these functions is to turn one's back on important existing resources; resources of a demonstrated record of performance in this difficult field.

What is needed is a mechanism under our control to insure coordination and fiscal control of these diverse activities. This is the missing element in the present situation, and the want of it may be the root of much of our present problem. I believe that the NRO as now functioning is itself competing with CIA, and probably with the Air Force, for the research, development, procurement and operational roles; while at the same time trying to render a staff function to manage the entire program for us.

It really comes down to a clear distinction between a line and a staff role for the NRO. Evidently, I favor the staff role. I favor the staff role because of the important historical lessons learned thus far in the reconnaissance arena. I also favor it because it would continue to combine under centralized management responsible to our joint determination the demonstrated capabilities of the organizations who have created the remarkable systems and operations on which we now depend for so much of our intelligence. In response to this approach, I have asked my staff to construct a draft agreement consistent with this view and our previous discussions which is attached hereto for your consideration.

I do recognize that there are important organizational advantages to having a single agency do the entire reconnaissance job. These reasons may be overwhelming in your estimation. If they are, and we move away from a significant delegation to CIA of responsibility for development, procurement, and operation of reconnaissance systems, I find it difficult to believe that CIA can contribute to the National Reconnaissance Program as it has

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in the past. If we do move toward a single reconnaissance agency, CIA can and would nominate selected personnel to such an organization. We would also expect such an organization to be fully and uniquely responsive to the needs of USIB. However, we should not then count on a continuing creative contribution by CIA. It would be better if we simply acknowledged that the reconnaissance problem is being turned over to DoD; that CIA would expect to task it and receive the resulting intelligence. However, we must weigh carefully the likely consequences of such a concentration.

When you have had a chance to examine our new version, may I have your views?

Sincerely,

W. F. Raborn
Director

Attachment

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